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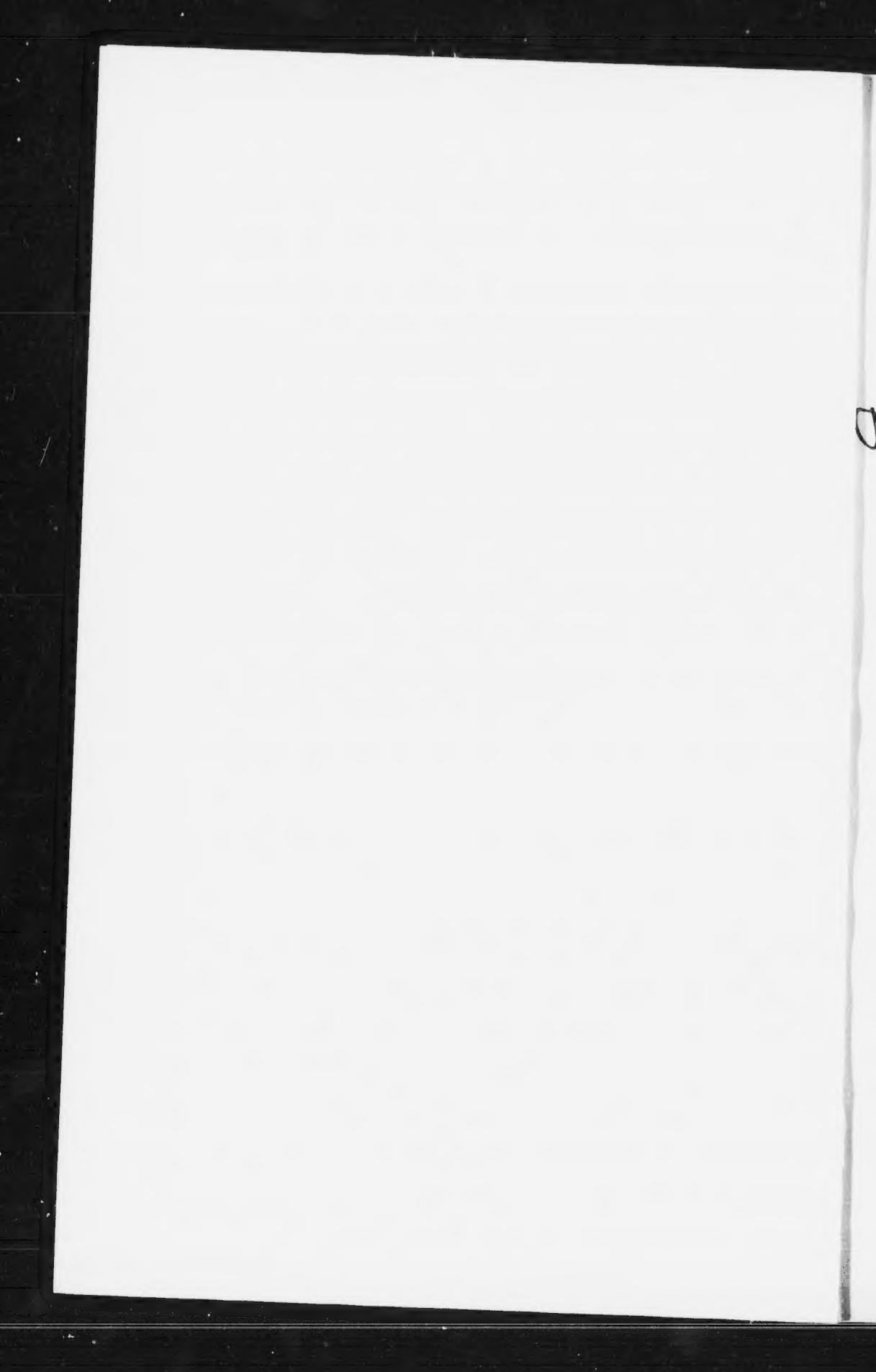
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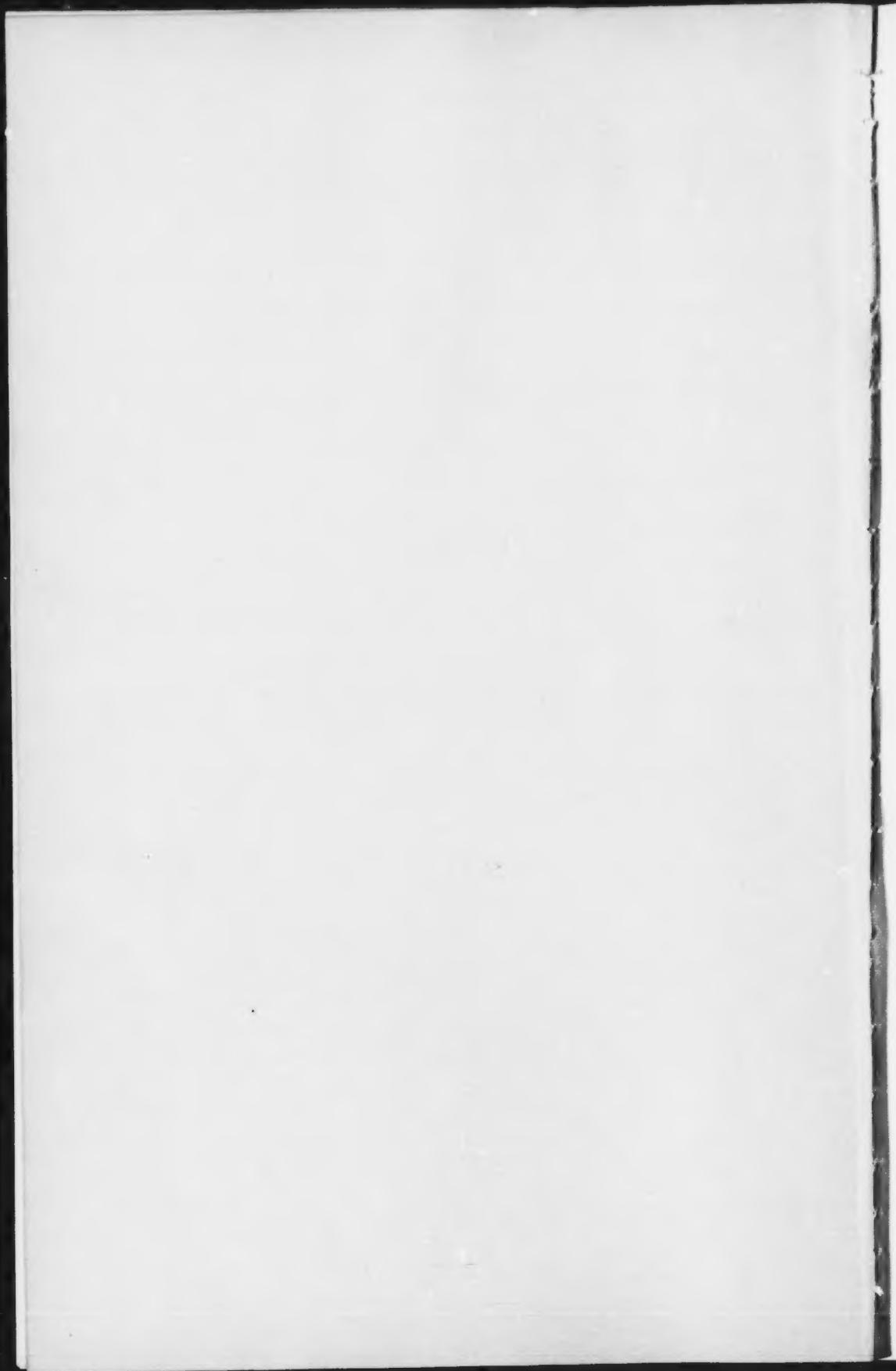
Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial



An Address by
Sir Thomas White, K.C.M.G.
Minister of Finance



To the Congregation of
St. James's Methodist Church
Montreal
on February 25th, 1917



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Public men frequently find themselves in unaccustomed situations and I must confess that this is a unique experience for me. To say the truth, I have never felt, in one sense more and in another sense less, like a real Minister in all my life. Now, let me reassure you, it is not my intention to attempt to preach a sermon; the preaching of sermons belongs to the clergy.

In thinking over the subjects with which I might deal that would be of public interest at this time, and at the same time having regard to the sanctity of the church, it occurred to me that there was one theme which might be discoursed upon by any speaker, lay or clerical, in any assembly throughout the Dominion. The subject which I have chosen in Self-Sacrifice and Self-Denial—two cardinal principles or virtues which lie at the basis of the Christian religion, as well as at the basis of the highest personal and national development.

We are living in the greatest epoch in the history of the world,—how great we cannot, even those possessing the highest imagination, more than remotely realize. It is not too much to say that it will require the judgment of a hundred years from now, less biased and more fully informed than ours, to estimate justly all the issues in this great conflict. In the days of peace, before the war, we used to indulge our natural craving for the excitement of great events by reading of the mighty conflicts of the past. We recall the names of the great captains in those wars which changed the face of the world. We recall Philip and Alexander; we recall Hannibal and Caesar, Mohammed, Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane. We recall Attila and Charlemagne, and coming down to more modern times, we recall the great captains of Louis XIV; we recall Napoleon and we recall Wellington. Those were the captains of the great wars of the past. Their greatest battles, although they were decisive in character, appear almost as skirmishes, having regard to the scale and magnitude of the military operations of to-day. Think of it, one-half the world, and the most important part of the world, at war. Twenty-five million men under

arms; a line of battle extending from the Baltic to the Persian Gulf and from the North Sea to the confines of Switzerland.

And such a war; agencies of destruction comparable only with the elements and forces of nature; war in the sky and war on the earth; war on the sea, and war beneath the earth and beneath the sea; a daily toll of wounds and deaths almost equal to the wastage of the most decisive battles of the past; destruction of human life and property on a scale undreamt of as being within the realm of the possible. Countrysides turned into cemeteries for the dead; towns turned into hospitals for the multitude of the wounded; the earth seamed and scarred and rent by mine, by trench, by high explosive and artillery fire. And on the sea, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, submarines, and thousands of auxiliary craft contending for the mastery. In the air Zeppelins and aeroplanes. These are the days in which we are living and this is the conflict in which we are participating.

We are now in the third and crucial year of this war. This is the year in which the belligerent powers will put forth their mightiest efforts. It is not too much to say that we are on the eve of the greatest and most momentous events by land and sea in the history of the war and by far the greatest in the history of mankind. This is the year in which the enemy will put forth his last terrible effort of despair. Let us be under no illusion; that effort on the part of the enemy will be backed by all the resolution, all the courage, all the science, all the power of the Central Empires. Such is the situation which confronts the British Empire, and every part of it, to-day, and it is for us to consider what is our duty and what part we should play in this tremendous crisis in the history of our affairs. One thing is clear, one thing is certain; this war, like all great conflicts, can be won only by sacrifice.

We are entering upon, so to speak, the religious stage of this war. No democracy ever puts forth its greatest, its strongest, its most powerful effort, until the religious sentiment of the democracy comes into force. We are entering upon the religious stage of this war. You recall the war, the greatest of the last century, the War of the American secession. You recall the closing period of that war; how the moral feeling, moral sentiment of the nation was aroused and found utterance through its poets and the public men. You recall Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic." You recall the second inaugural address of the greatest of Presidents of the American people. Let me read it to you to show how the religious feeling of the President was touched by the great crisis with which he was confronted.

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, so still must it be said 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in: to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

The religious feeling of the American people found vent, as I have said, in the utterances of the nation's poets and public men. I believe the British Empire and Canada is now entering on a like stage. The appeal now will be to the conscience as well as to the spirit and to the courage and patriotism of the British people. There will be searching of hearts; each man and each woman will ask: "What can I do to assist; what is my duty at this great crisis in our affairs?"

What is the call? The call is for men, for munitions, for money. They can only be had, they can only be got, by self-sacrifice and by self-denial. The call is for men and evermore for men. Those of the sons of Canada who go to the front, the mothers and the wives and sisters who send them forth, are exhibiting the highest quality of self-sacrifice.

Do you ever reflect what Canada has done? Napoleon and Wellington I have referred to; the one had eighty thousand and the other seventy thousand at Waterloo; one hundred and fifty thousand men altogether. There were about the same number under Meade and Lee at Gettysburg. Canada has sent overseas twice the number of men Napoleon and Wellington had under their commands at Waterloo, or that Meade and Lee had under their commands at Gettysburg. Our boys are fighting three thousand miles, at least, from home,—many of them four, five, and six thousand miles from home. When they get leave from the front, they cannot return to Canada; they get leave to go back to London. The highest qualities of sacrifice are being exhibited by those noble sons of Canada who have gone to the front and by the mothers, wives and sisters and fathers who have sent them forth.

I was at the front in November of last year; I visited all the Canadian divisions; I saw the men and I talked with their officers. In speaking to their officers I frequently asked the question, "How long since you have seen your wife?" "Two years," "a year and a half," "a year." "When do you expect to see your home?" Sometimes the curiously significant answer would come back with a shake of the head, "Is your name written on the shell?" Fatalism has developed to a certain extent among the men who walk daily hand in hand with death. I saw our men go into the trenches with gallant mien and cheerful faces. You and I sleep in our downy beds at night; those men sleep sometimes standing six inches and a foot in water, leaning against the parapet for two or three nights on end; all cheerful because of their quality. I saw them in the hospitals and talked with them there; always with indisputable cheerfulness which would bring a lump to your throat. There were men here with "trench feet," men who had been wounded by shrapnel or by high explosive shell splinters, or by

machine gun bullets. Three or four cases stand out: one, a boy of about eighteen or nineteen, from Lethbridge; a very handsome young man with a smiling face. Cheerful he lay there with a withered arm and a stump of a leg, smiling. That is sacrifice.

Another case stands out; the case of an Englishman; he had been a mechanic in Toronto. At the first call he joined the colors and went to Valcartier. He was lying in a cot paralyzed from the waist down; his wife, an English woman, sitting opposite him, cheerful. That is sacrifice.

And yet another case; a beautiful young man, one of the handsomest I had ever seen; he had been operated on two or three days before and was lying out on a moveable bed; brown curly hair; Greek features in regularity and beauty of symmetry; two fever spots on either cheek indicating the temperature. There came to my memory a poem I read years ago when a boy at school:

"Into the ward in the whitewashed halls,
Where the dead and dying lay;
Wounded by bayonets, shells, and balls,
Somebody's darling was borne one day."

I often wonder if he recovered; let us hope that he did. That is sacrifice.

At the Somme I saw a beautiful little cemetery, Tara Hill Cemetery, with the wooden head-boards and faded floral wreaths which the affection of the soldiers had strewn over the graves of their comrades. I saw them digging graves; one for the son of a personal friend of mine. That is sacrifice, self-sacrifice. Everything that a man hath will he give for his life, yet here were these men in the flush of youth, all their loves, affections, all their ambitions quenched in death. These men have given up their lives for the Empire, for Canada, for you and for me. That is sacrifice, self-sacrifice, the highest exhibition of sacrifice that can be given by the citizens.

I saw a message recently couched in very earnest language from Canon Scott of Quebec; the language may appear strong but it is sincere. Among other things he asked: "What would a rich man give if he lay in a shell crater wounded in both legs; what would he give for a stretcher-bearer to bring him to a dressing station?" He said he would give all he had. He goes on:

"What a revelation to Canadians it would be if they could all visit the front, but alas! Canada will never know what her sons have endured day after day, month after month, year after year. Cheerfully and quietly they have endured and suffered and fought. If Canada ever forgets those men, my prayer is that she may go to the dogs. We are going to smash the Huns but we are a long way from doing it yet; it will take the supremest effort of our whole Empire, every man must put his shoulder to the wheel, even if it be a chariot of fire."

The language may appear strong, but it has at least the merit of being sincere. I saw Canon Scott at the front; his face was the face of a seer, almost divine; rapt, inspired, ministering to the wounded

and the dying. He told me how he had sought for the body of his son; sought for it under shell fire, and when at last he found it he identified it by a ring upon a finger, which he showed to me. Canon Scott is at the front; Canon Scott has made the sacrifice of sacrifices; Canon Scott has given his son; Canon Scott is entitled to be heard. He emphasizes the sacrifice which is being made by the sons of Canada at the front, and he emphasizes the obligation which this country owes to the sons of Canada; he emphasizes the task which lies before us, and he says that every man must put his shoulder to the wheel, even if it be a chariot of fire.

More men are wanted. In other words, more self-sacrifice, such as I have been referring to, is wanted. If the war is to be won, and won decisively, it must be. So I have said the call is for men, and they are needed more and more at the front.

What else is the call for? The call is for munitions and the call is for money. What is the duty of those not of military age or those who for some other reason cannot go to the front? Every man and every woman in Canada can help win this war by practising self-denial. What do I mean by that? I mean that it is the bounden obligation of every man, of every woman in Canada, to work harder and produce more, to cut down luxurious, unnecessary expenditure, to save money for the purpose of the war. This war is going to be determined, as nearly all great wars are determined, notwithstanding the fluctuating swaying fortunes of battles here and there, by attrition, the wearing down process, the preponderance of force of every kind of man-power, industrial power, money power, agricultural, productive power.

What, therefore, is the duty of the individual Canadian who cannot go to the front and who is searching his heart as to what is his duty? Work harder. War is a terrible realist. Among other things, it makes us realize our own power. Suppose any one should have told us three or four years ago that Canada could do what she has done in this war; we would not have believed it possible. How many of the public men of Great Britain or of this country, how many citizens of the Empire, could have believed that individually they could go through what they have gone through since the war broke out? War makes us realize our reserve power, the amount of energy not utilized in time of peace.

A great many work hard in time of peace, others fairly hard, some not hard, some don't work at all. In days of peace there is a social stigma sometimes in regard to work, the most ennobling factor in human progress. Work is good for a man and good for a woman physically, intellectually, and morally.

Idleness is bad for a man and for a woman physically, intellectually and morally. Abraham Lincoln said he thought that the Lord must like homely people because he made so many of them; I think he likes people who work because he made it indispensably necessary that the human race should work for its own advancement and welfare.

The duty of every man who can produce anything useful or essen-

tial for the national good is to strengthen the nation and put for his utmost effort. Think of the sacrifices I have referred to, made by the men at the front.

Increased production is necessary, increased agricultural production especially. Every acre, every plot of land in the Empire, should be made to produce this year to the utmost of the human energy available for the purpose. The only reason the nation can sustain the burden of the war is because of the enormous expenditures in peace time for luxuries being discontinued; the cutting out of all but essentials, and there are comparatively few essentials in this world after all. Therefore it is the bounden duty of every citizen to multiply his efforts, to greatly increase production. On the other hand, he must cut down expenditure of an improper kind. Every citizen who uses more in his household than his household actually needs is increasing the cost of living for those less fortunate and he is hindering the prosecution of the war; he may not look at it in that way, but he is doing it. He is consuming something that is not necessary for him and he is denying something to his neighbor who may have a small salary. Let the nation tighten its belt and you will find the cost of living come down. In war time there is a great circulation of money and people spend more, consume more, where they should consume less.

With the troops at the front, there is a reduction of the area of agricultural territory by reason of the withdrawal of help from the fields to the front; by reason of enlistment and recruiting the supply has diminished, whereas the demand is increasing. It is the bounden duty of every citizen not only to increase production, but to diminish his consumption so far as concerns articles of a luxurious character, because in that way he can help to win the war.

What further results from this? National savings result; men save their money, women save their money, and the money is available to the Government of the country for the purpose of the war, otherwise they could not carry on the war. The most decisive factor in this war to-day is the British Empire. Why? Because of the enormous resources and the wealth of the British Empire. That wealth and those resources must be brought to bear by increasing production, by harder work and by limiting luxurious expenditure. Increased production and increased savings mean increased national strength.

I have described it as self-denial, but really, it is not much in the way of self-denial, because it is good for the nation; it is good for every man and woman in the nation to work harder, within, of course, the limits of health; to cut down luxurious expenditure, to save money. We might just as well get accustomed to it in war time because there may be a period after the war in which we will have to continue to work very hard, and it is for the good of the nation.

The reason why great nations so speedily overtake the wastage of war is because every one works hard, cuts down expenditures and saves. It is amazing how quickly a population will recover from the effect of war. I do not minimize the obligations assumed, but by the adoption of a proper policy, increasing the production, diminishing the

consumption, by national saving, the wastage of war can be borne by a nation. Increase national saving and that will enable us to meet our war expenditure; to pay for the munitions required by Great Britain, and by our troops at the front; to pay for supplies bought by Great Britain, to pay for wheat and food stuffs.

Great Britain can buy on this side of the Atlantic, only if she can borrow on this side of the Atlantic, and Canada can lend money to the Dominion Government and the Imperial Government only if Canada saves money. It is the bounden duty, therefore, of every citizen to exercise self-denial along the lines I have indicated. Let us see what Lloyd George says on this subject. He has just made one of the greatest and most courageous utterances in the history of Parliament, a wonderful speech from a wonderful man. He is right in taking the public into his confidence; a public man can do nothing without the public; with the public he can do everything. What has he to say on this question?

"There are millions of gallant young men in France, in Salonika, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, facing torture, terror, death. They are the flower of our race. Unless the Nation is prepared to take its share of the sacrifice, theirs will be in vain, and I say it would be a crime" (I am quoting from Lloyd George) "for any Government to ask them to risk their lives in the conflict if they know the Nation behind them is faint-hearted or selfish; their sacrifice would be thrown away, we have not the right to ask it."

He speaks of the sacrifice to which I have referred. He says the people at home must not be faint-hearted, must not be selfish, otherwise the sacrifice of those valiant men will be thrown away, and we have no right to ask it.

What does Sir John Jellicoe say on the same subject? I have clipped this from one of last evening's papers. I saw Sir John Jellicoe when I visited the fleet. He is a wonderful little man. He has two qualities which I always look for in a great man; one is personality, and the other is simplicity; Sir John Jellicoe has both. This is what he says:

"Every man in the Navy is eager and prepared to do his duty; he asks, and he is entitled by his service and sacrifice to ask, that the Nation shall do its part of the work with equal self-denial and diligence as our soldiers and sailors, so that there may be provided that great variety and enormous volume of material required for the fighting forces, and that all men and women shall by practising strict economy render possible the maintenance of adequate financial sinews of war. If we all do our part all will be well with us."

He says the men in the Navy are doing their part, and they are. I shall never forget the thrill when I first, on a destroyer, one dark night, travelling at a rate of thirty miles an hour, saw a flash in the distance, showing the presence of that great power which more than any agency of the war has stood between the Hohenzollerns and domination of the world—the British Fleet. These men, in storm and

sunshine, in heat and cold, winter and summer, keep their vigil day and night with the perils of submarines, mines and sudden attacks; these men risk their lives daily and nightly for the people of the Empire, including you and me.

Now is it too much, in view of all the sacrifices to which I have referred, if we are asked to deny ourselves those things which we do not need and to put forth every productive energy which we can spare? The call is for men; the call is for munitions; the call is for money. These can be obtained only by self-sacrifice and by self-denial. Men and women are searching their conscience; we have reached the religious stage of this great war; each is asking the same question: What can I do to help? I have told you what, in my view, is the national duty. I have confidence that the people of Canada will discharge their duty. It is a great thing when the conscience of a nation is touched. Men are beginning to ask themselves: Am I doing my share manfully, patriotically, justly, as between myself and those who have gone to the front fighting for me? The conscience of the nation, the conscience of the world, is being touched by this war. I believe that the greatest good will come to humanity from this mighty conflict, by the touching of the conscience of the world. Sacrifice, as I said at the outset, lies at the basis of religion and of individual and national development.

Before the war we were in a time of profound and material prosperity. After Trafalgar, at the beginning of the last century, after Waterloo in 1815, practically for the whole of the last century, Great Britain was undisputed mistress of the seas and the dominant power in the world. I think she is so to-day, but she was unquestionably, unmistakably so during the last century; there was no external pressure, no threat of danger from without. As a result of that, individual liberty was carried to the extreme; the bee became, in his own estimation, of more importance than the hive. There was no threat of danger and the freedom of the individual became of more importance. War has broken out, the greatest in the history of mankind, a menace of external danger, a real danger to the integrity of the Empire, to the safety of the citizens and their institutions. Then the State began to resume control. We have now an army of five or six million in Great Britain to protect her. The hive has become of more importance than the bee; the tendency was for the bee to be of more importance than the hive; war rectifies the balance.

The conscience of the world, I have said, has been and is being touched and that is the greatest good in my belief that will come from this war. Out of the welter of this great conflict, this appalling struggle with its outpouring of blood and treasure, with all its hideous barbarities and cruelties, with the violent passions it has excited, will come a higher and more glorious civilization and a nobler manhood and womanhood than has been. Even as from the miry clay, from the blackest soil of earth springs the undefiled purity, the exquisite whiteness, the radiant—and almost divine—beauty of the lily's matchless bloom.

